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resigns third term after paid medical leave

Bobby Ardoin Special to the Daily World

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St. Landry Parish President Bill Fontenot, who has been on medical leave because of health problems, announced Tuesday he will resign from the office he won re-election to last year.

"After much deliberation, I have decided it best that I step aside," said Fontenot. "This was not an easy decision to make, and it is a decision that I made in conjunction with my family and physicians."

Fontenot said he would officially step down as parish president at the end of the day on Friday.

"It has been a great run, and I have enjoyed every minute of it," said Fontenot. "I'm proud of the work we've done for the parish. I truly believed we worked to move St. Landry Parish in the right direction."

Fontenot, 68, was elected to three consecutive four-year terms as president, beginning in 2012. He had started his third term only a few weeks before taking his paid medical leave.

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"I've been working as a public servant my whole life," said Fontenot. "Between my work at the Department of Transportation and my time as parish president, I've been blessed with helping the people of Louisiana and, most importantly, the citizens of St. Landry Parish."

In December Fontenot defeated former St. Landry Parish Councilman Ken Marks in a runoff election. Fontenot received 53% of the vote.

Fontenot, however, did not get to experience much of his third term. In February, Fontenot took a leave of absence due to what he stated were health concerns and has not appeared at any of the parish council meetings since that announcement.

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for basal cell carcinoma.

Fontenot appointed Finance Director Amanda Cain as the parish president designee. Cain has served as finance director and parish president for the past couple of months.

According to the parish Home Rule Charter, a parish president who is absent from the position for six straight months due to a disability requires the Parish Council to declare the office vacant.

According to the charter, the council will have 30 days to appoint a replacement for Fontenot, and because there are three years left on Fontenot's term, a special election will be called.

The Council, the Charter says, shall hold a public meeting to declare the office of president vacant. The Council afterward may act to appoint an acting parish president and set a date for a parish wide election for a new president.

The council has been considering hiring another parish executive at a salary of at least \$77,000 to help cover for Fontenot during his leave.